

**Testimony on behalf of the North Central Regional Mental Health Board**  
**Before the Appropriations Committee**  
**IN OPPOSITION TO HB 7027**  
**An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations for the Department of Social Services**  
**February 16, 2017**  
**Marcia DuFore, Suffield CT**

Senator Formica and Osten, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Marcia DuFore. I am testifying as Director of the North Central Regional Mental Health Board and member of KTP and I'm here to express our Board's opposition to some of the proposed cuts in the DSS budget.

Our Board's primary responsibility is to study the mental health needs of people in our region and assist DMHAS with setting priorities for services to address those needs. Many of these cuts (although outside the DMHAS budget) would have serious negative consequences for our constituents. We are strongly opposed to one in particular: the elimination of co-pay protection (currently capped at \$17 per month) for people who are dually eligible (have both Medicare and Medicaid benefits). This comes with a very small savings for the state (last year estimated between \$80,000 and \$90,000). We understand, given the enormity of the budget deficit we are facing, the need to search our pockets for every scrap of change we can find to solve this problem. However, the people impacted by this cut are people who are not in a position to balance Connecticut's budget on the backs of their already vulnerable life circumstances. Most are struggling to manage chronic medical conditions (often multiple conditions requiring multiple medications). Removing this cap increases their risk of homelessness, serious illness or more costly medical care as they find themselves no longer able balance the cost of food, rent, and high prescriptions costs. Last year this body reviewed this issue and reinstated the co-pay cap. We ask that you do so again.